know there are plenty of people on both sides who like to beat up on any number of people who are part of the six groups. There are people who like to beat up on unions. There are people who like to beat up on drug companies. This isn't about—this isn't about any of the people who responded to the President's call and went down to the White House that day to work for, arguably, what would be a good thing in reforming some aspects of our Nation's health care system.

The problem is that the American people didn't get to see what it was they had on the table, what the offers were, what the counteroffers were, what wasn't offered, and who agreed to what, who was on the side of the people and who was on the side of the special interests. As the President said, we didn't get to see that.

As it stands now, I asked, I want to know what the White House negotiated, with whom, and on what terms. I want to know how those deals influenced the legislative process. Certainly, there were several times where we bumped up against it. Certainly, the Senate Finance Committee did, and they were told, Hold on, you can't do that. We've got a deal. But did it also influence the legislative process when my amendments and GREG WALDEN's amendments were stripped out of the committee-passed bill and were stripped out of the Speaker's office never to see the light of day? So was that part of the legislative process influenced by those deals? We will never know if we don't get that information.

And I want to know why a President who committed himself to transparency feels really no need to heed requests for transparency by the committee; why the President who ran on transparency feels no need to heed a request for documents by an elected Member of Congress, why they think it is okay to just simply not respond to a letter, ignore it, and we hope it goes away.

Now, last week, the President, on one of the interviews, said that his lack of transparency was ''a mistake.'' If true, if he feels it is a mistake, he can correct the mistake. It's not too late. He can correct the mistake by turning over the information requested, and, in fact, turning over all of the information, saying, Do you know what? We are not going to hide behind executive privilege here. If there is an e-mail between my Chief of Staff and the health care czar that you think is important, we're willing to let you see that as well. We're willing to let the American people see that, because we have nothing to hide.

If they don't do that, what are we left to surmise? That they've got something to hide. And what would they have to hide? I don't know. Here the fantasy can become worse than the reality. It would be better for the White House to provide this information. Again, the truth, the truth will, in all likelihood, be much less significant than what each of us will be left to imagine on our own if we are not provided that information.

Now, to fully understand the policy choices going forward, we need to know what took place at the White House last year. I can't say it enough. I can't say it in enough different ways. The American people expect us to act in their interest rather than protect the business interests of those currying favor in Washington. We hear that all the time. In fact, we hear this President say that lobbyists won't have any access to his administration, and then we have secret deals with six groups that play a big role, a big role, in the cost of delivering health care in this country, and we don't get to see that.

If any member of those six groups down at the White House sought protections or made unreciprocated concessions to Washington politicians, I think the American people deserve to know. The American people would likely want to know that information. These negotiations may have produced consensus on policy changes that are proper and needed, but we will never be certain until the facts are known. And if the facts aren't known, then the reality is not known. And if the reality is not known, then the fantasy becomes the reality, the worst excess that you could imagine is probably what happened; otherwise, they would open the books and tell us.

Now, I will just leave you with the same thought one last time about the promises made during the Presidential campaign and after about how this process would be an open process, how this process would be an inclusive process, and inclusive not just to Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle, which it has not been, but an inclusive process that would include the American people; because, after all, these decisions on health care, yeah, they're tough, yeah, there are going to be likely some winners and losers in whatever is finally crafted by the House and Senate, but it's going to affect the delivery of health care. It's going to affect the life of every doctor, nurse, hospital administrator, every mother, father, child, every husband, wife, every citizen of the United States, not just next year, not just the year after that, and not just the year after that, but for the next three generations; how health care is delivered in the country, who gets what, who pays for it, when it's administered, who can't get what they need. All of that is going to be governed by language in this legislation.

And if there were outside influences on crafting that language in this legislation, we need to know about that because, otherwise, we don't know the questions to ask. We don't know whether to embrace or reject the legislation, because we simply don't know who, what, and where was involved in the process. And as a consequence, it makes it impossible, literally impossible, to evaluate the worth of this legislation.

So here we sit, on Groundhog Day, sort of revisiting what happened over the last year with health care reform. On February 2 of 2010, the passage of a comprehensive health care bill looks as unlikely as at any time in our history past of this Congress. A year ago, it looked like a certainty. Today, it looks extremely problematic.

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And what is the one thing that could have given us a better bill, given us a better process, given people some reason to be behind this legislation that Congress is considering?

The one thing that could have happened that didn't was opening the process up, turning on the C–SPAN cameras, inviting them in to that big conference table in the Speaker's office or that big conference table in the majority leader's office over in the Senate, or that big conference table down in the Cabinet room at the White House. Turn those cameras on, let the American people see who was around that table, who was willing to talk, who was willing to give, who was only willing to get. That would bring powerful information to provide to the American people.

The President could have recruited, could have recruited from the American people, folks who like this legislation who would then ask for it. But, instead, they pushed everyone away, pushed them away from the table, turned off the camera, turned off the lights. ''Don't look at the man behind the curtain. We know what is best for you. This bill will be good for you. Trust us. You will like this bill once we get it passed.'' Well, that is nonsense. The American people know that is nonsense.

Turn on the lights, turn on C–SPAN, let the people in, and let's give this bill the full public airing that it has deserved.

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LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today on account of business in the district.

Mr. ELLISON (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today on account of business in the district.

Mr. TIAHRT (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for today on account of being unavoidably detained in Kansas.

Mr. YOUNG of Florida (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for today and the balance of the week on account of a death in the family.

Mr. EHLERS (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for today on account of a family member's medical emergency.

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SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to: